

Congresswoman Kosmas Wins Key Battle to Eliminate Hard Deadline for Shuttle Retirement

Kosmas Successful in Her Efforts to Include Shuttle Funding in Budget for FY 2011

(Washington, DC) – Today, Congresswoman Suzanne Kosmas (FL-24) announced that the House and Senate conference agreement on the budget resolution (S.Con.Res 13) reflects her request to include a provision that removes the hard deadline for Shuttle retirement. The final budget resolution provides an additional \$2.5 billion in fiscal year 2011 for the Shuttle program, giving NASA the flexibility it needs to fly the current manifest beyond 2010.

“I am glad to see that the House and Senate budget committees heeded my call to remove the arbitrary deadline for Shuttle retirement and to include critical funding for our space program,” said Congresswoman Kosmas. “This budget is a significant step towards maintaining safety, minimizing the spaceflight gap, and preserving the highly skilled workforce at Kennedy Space Center and throughout Central Florida. Kennedy Space Center is an economic engine for our community and I will not stand idly by while these jobs are at risk.”

Congresswoman Kosmas voted against the original House version citing the lack of flexibility and funding for the Shuttle program past 2010. Last week, Kosmas sent a letter to the chairs and ranking members of the House and Senate Budget Committees outlining the risks associated with a hard deadline and urging them to include a Senate provision that would give NASA the flexibility to fly the Shuttle into 2011 if necessary.

The conferees agreed with Kosmas and the conference agreement explanatory statement contains the following language explicitly providing funding for the Shuttle program beyond 2010:

“The conference agreement recognizes the scientific and technological contributions of our nation's manned and unmanned space program and the strategic importance of uninterrupted human access to space, and supports efforts to reduce the impending gap in US human spaceflight. The conference agreement matches the President's request for NASA in 2010 (while acknowledging that an additional \$400 million was appropriated for NASA exploration in the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) and provides \$2.5 billion above the President's request in 2011. The additional funding is provided in 2011 in anticipation that the funding is needed for the remaining eight space shuttle missions to safely fly and to complete the construction and equipping of the international space station.”

The conference agreement on the budget resolution is expected to be up for final passage this week. The full explanatory statement on the budget conference agreement is available [HERE](#).

The full text Congresswoman Kosmas's letter to the Budget Committees can be found below:

Dear Chairman Spratt, Chairman Conrad, Ranking Member Ryan and Ranking Member Gregg:

As you work to draft a conference agreement on the budget resolution, I strongly urge you to adopt a provision included in the Senate's budget that would provide an additional \$2.5 billion for NASA's shuttle program in Fiscal Year 2011. Providing this funding will ensure that NASA will be able to safely complete construction of the International Space Station (ISS), fulfill our international obligations, and reduce the impending spaceflight gap.

The Senate's budget recognizes the risks and undue schedule pressure associated with a fixed retirement date and approves shuttle funding through FY2011. This will ensure that NASA will be able to fly at least through the end of calendar year 2010 and into 2011 if necessary in order to fulfill its manifest and complete ISS construction and utility flights, as authorized by Congress in the NASA Authorization Act of 2008. With only 12% of flights launching on time, this is the most prudent course of action.

The need to extend the shuttle program's arbitrary retirement date was clearly demonstrated by the most recent shuttle mission, which was delayed a month to adequately address equipment issues. Shuttle workers used this precious time to successfully address technical issues, resulting in a safe and successful mission to deploy the space station's final set of solar arrays.

In Florida, the retirement of the shuttle will have an immense economic impact, as every job at Kennedy Space Center creates an additional 2.8 jobs throughout Florida. Without taking action to reduce the spaceflight gap, tens of thousands of Floridians could be added to the state's already record unemployment numbers during these tough economic times. Removing the arbitrary deadline will help us preserve our highly-skilled and dedicated workforce, enabling the transfer of more workers to Constellation programs that are scheduled to come online in the middle part of the next decade.

Schedule flexibility is also necessary in order to complete construction and ensure viability of the International Space Station, which is a unique foreign policy and scientific tool. Research conducted aboard the ISS, which has been designated as a National Laboratory, could lead to innovations that could improve the quality of life for all Americans and enable us to address important issues facing our nation, including developing alternative energy, improving health care, strengthening commerce and communications, and studying and better understanding climate change. These advancements will only be possible if we allow NASA to complete the shuttle manifest based on a flexible schedule to deliver necessary hardware and scientific tools.

By adopting the Senate's provision to give NASA additional time and flexibility to complete its manifest, we will avoid creating undue schedule pressure that could increase risks, reduce the spaceflight gap, complete ISS construction, and retain our highly-skilled workforce. This additional funding will also ensure that NASA will be able to deliver the Alpha-Magnetic Spectrometer to the ISS, a flight that has been authorized but not funded, and avoid diverting funds from other programs as it has in the past. It is especially vital to ensure that funding for the next generation of spacecraft is not affected.

I urge you to take these factors into account and to remove this arbitrary deadline by adopting the Senate's funding for the shuttle program in FY2011.

Sincerely,

Suzanne M. Kosmas

Member of Congress

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